

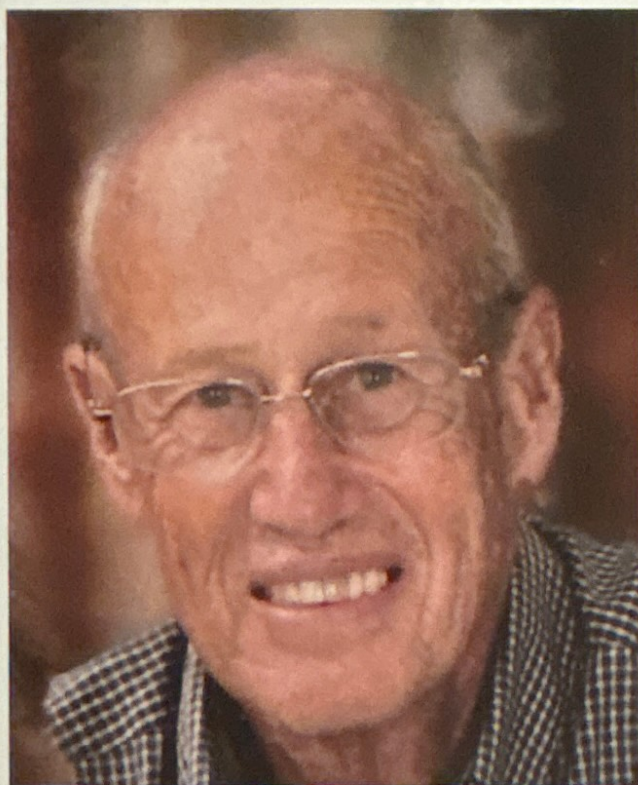
**YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY
AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY**

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

"A Blessed Life"

With all my love to my wonderful wife and partner, Susan Mary, for every one of the 62 years we have had together.



GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

CHAPTER 1

MY FAVOURITES

Time of day: Early morning

Season: Spring and autumn

Way to relax: Off the farm

Author: Judy Nunn

Artist: Albert Namatjira

Musician: Chopin

Famous person: Queen Elizabeth II

Movie: The Man from Snowy River

Book: Any book on Australian History

Animal: Border Collie dog

Holiday destination: Broome W.A

Cuisine: Barbecue + Sunday roast

Restaurant: Sue's Kitchen

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Type of exercise: Walking

Country: Australia

Smell: Sue's cooking

Word: Love

Quote: Smile and others smile with you



At the Wedding of our First Grandson Harry Phillips and Kate Miles. March 2021

CHAPTER 2

A BASIC FAMILY TREE

What's your full name?

Gavin George Christie

When were you born?

29 October 1937

Where were you born?

Sydney Australia

What are your parents' names?

Mother: Josephine Renee Christie ne Stevens 1/11/1901-7/8/1986

Father: William Lyell Christie 14/8/1904-6/9/1984

Where were your parents born?

Mother: The Rocks Sydney

Father: Randwick Sydney



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What are your siblings' names?

Sibling's name	Their partner	Their children
William John 12/7/1931-13/10/2002	Norma Dawn Wyatt 30/12/1930-8/3/1995	Lynne 9/3/1965, Gregory 30/10/1966

What is your partner's name?

Susan (Sue) Mary Christie ne Hocking 23/7/1939 M 8/2/1964

What are your children's names?

Child's name	Their partner	Their children
Annie 24/12/1964	Graeme Phillips 01/01/1962-27/05/2011	Jessica 4/11/1990, Harry 28/10/1992, Jack 18/8/1997, Will 1/3/2001.
Katie 20/8/1966	Andrew Graham 04/08/1964	Georgie 27/10/1991, Sarah 16/9/1993, Nicholas 10/11/1995.
Patricia (Trish) 02/09/1968	Ian Forsyth 01/04/1964	Rosie 18/6/2001, Angus 23/12/2003.
Jodi (Jo) 10/04/1971	Sandra Gibney 13/02/1976	

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



A great group of the 6 of us.

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What are your uncle and aunt's names?



Mum's brothers and sisters: Mary 1891-1921. Kathleen 1892-1972. Eileen 1895-1937. Cecila 1896-1970. John 1898-1917. Philomena 1905-1944. Maurice 1907-1997. Patricia (Babe) 1909-1993.



Dad's brothers and sisters: Beatrice (Jude) 1897- 1982. Margaret (Pop) 1899 -1982. Dorothy 1902 - 1982. George 1906 -1987. Joseph 1909 - 1969. Nanny Christie 1874 - 1963

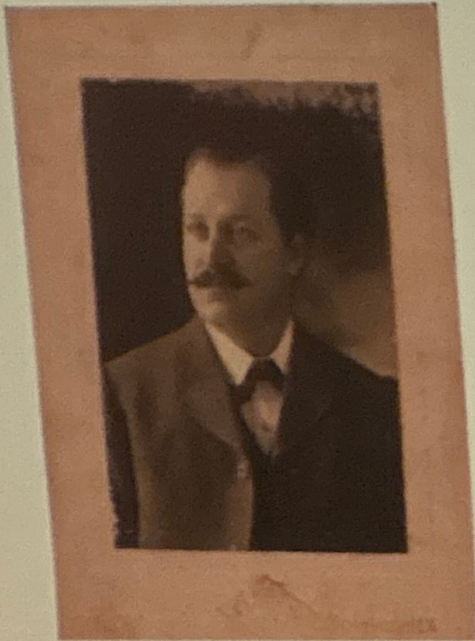


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What are your grandparents' names?

Mum's Mum: Kathleen Stevens ne Noonan 1/5/1872 - 20/6/1918

Mum's Dad: John Michael Stevens 31/8/1861 M.16/4/1890 -D 5/11/1916



John Michael Stevens 31/8/1861 - 5/11/1916 3rd .
Musician, Hotel Keeper and the man who built the first
"Walk Up" Flats in Windmill St. The Rocks.

Kate Noonan/Stevens 1/5/1872 - 20/6/1918 My
Grandmother, with 6 daughters and 2 sons. My
mother, the 5th born and one son, Jack died in
France 14/7/1917.



Dad's Mum: Beatrice Christie ne Wade 5/1/1874- 5/4/1963

Dad's Dad: William Christie 29/7/1871. M 11/2/1897.D 18/11/1910

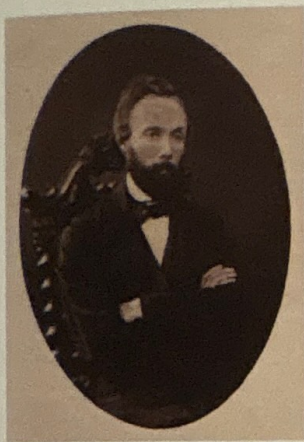
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If you know any relatives further back than your grandparents, what are their names and how are you related?

My Paternal Great Grandparents

Williams Parents;

Lyell Symers Christie 18/6/1824 - 24/9/1906 & Margaret Brown 13/11 1837 - 16/11/1902



Lyell Symers Christie 18/6/1824 - 24/9/1906 Arrived in Melbourne a free settler, just as the Gold Rush started and became "the largest Retailer in the Colony".



Margaret Brown 24/11/1837-16/11/1902 Had 8 girls and 3 boys, but lost 1 girl, Martha aged 5, and two boys soon after birth.



The Christie Family 1902
With Margaret's photo

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

Beatrice's Parents:

George Wade 1837 - 09/06/1913 & Mary Anne Walsh 1844 - 30/12/1906

My Maternal Great Grandparents

John Michael's Parents:

Richard Stevens 04/06/1835 - 10/6/1886 & Mary Anne Lord 17/11/1844 - 1/9/1879

Kathleen's Parents:

Patrick Noonan 1848 - 14/6/1916 & Mary Shanahan unknown - 02/08/1879

Anything else you'd like to add about your family tree?

Some of my Great Great Grandparents were born in Scotland.

William Christie 1783 - 1860 and Catherine Greig 1785 - 1861

Others were born in Ireland.

Thomas Stevens 1785-2/2/1850 and Catherine Larkin 1798-8/7/1867

They arrived in Australia as convicts

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

A brief family history of Sue (Susan) Christie, nee Hocking.

Siblings:

James (Jim) Hocking 1944 – 2014. Children; Anita & Michelle

Michael (Mick) Hocking 1947. Children; Kim, Scott, Vicki

Parents:

William (Willy) Athol Hocking 21/9/ 1904 –3/7/1985 & Mabel (Mabs) Gillies 24/2/1913
-6/8/ 1993

Grandparents:

Paternal; William James Hocking 1873 – 1937 & Kate Berechree 1866 – 1933

Maternal; Percival (Percy) McPherson Gillies 1887 – 1951 & Gertrude (Gertie) Forster
1888 – 1964

Sue didn't know her paternal grandparents, but her maternal grandparents were affectionately known to her as "Pop & Da".



Michael, Sue and Jim

CHAPTER 3

CHILDHOOD

Describe your childhood in 3 words

Wonderful. Blissful. Ignorance.

Where did you grow up?

As my parents seemed to have always been renting, it has been difficult to track the places my brother and I actually lived in during our early years. My first memory is Edgecliff, and from there we were in Double Bay and then two places in Rose Bay. When I was going to School we were right in the City, and after High School we moved to Palm Beach for a summer and then to Carabella St Kirribilli, just near where I had gone to St Aloysius. We owned that home for 40 years and it was only sold a few years after our parents' death.

Describe the neighbourhood you grew up in.

We were always living in very comfortable homes in what I suppose would be described as Middle Class neighbourhoods.

What was the house or apartment like that you grew up in?

Most of the homes were either a flat or cottage, where Bill and I shared a bedroom. There was one bathroom and a nice sunny verandah.

During the war Dad was a rather shadowy figure, coming and going in Army Uniform. I do not remember him until I was about 8. In the last year of the war he was away in Ambon in the Pacific.

The home in Double Bay was a two story mansion, set in a jungle, and we must have rented the ground floor.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

When we lived in the Hotel in Young St City, we had the whole 2nd floor, with guests on the floor above and two bars and a "Ladies Parlor" on the Ground floor.

My Grandmother's holiday home at Palm Beach was quite large, and was a wonderful place to spend that summer, just after I left school.

The next and last home at Kirribilli had a wonderful view right over the Harbour and was divided into two living areas, one for us, and one for the family of Mum's youngest sister, when they moved off the land at Forbes.

What's your earliest childhood memory?

My first memory is of a green metal cot that I could rattle against a black brick wall to get attention!. However, there is a photo that helps the memory!

At the same time I do remember being carried into an underground cave in the backyard, which must have been an Air Raid shelter.



Me and Dad
meeting my
first Sheep. C
1938

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

What's one memory from your childhood that makes you smile?

Whilst I was growing up, Mum would take me to a guest house, near where Warragamba Dam is now, that had a horse riding stable nearby. Every morning the stable owner would drive down the dirt road with horse and cart, picking up anyone who wanted to ride. This is where my love of horses began.

However, it was a pretty frightening experience. The ride was always up the dirt road beside the river, forcing the horse all the way to a gate. Then turning around and hanging on as the whole group raced back to the stables. It was good training for the future!

Describe a typical family dinner – who cooked, what did you eat and what were your favourite foods?

Our mother was always the cook for our family, and a wonderful one at that. Food was short during the War, and we had to use coupons when buying. I was always told to eat whatever was put in front of me, and never waste any. My father, when he got back from the war, always loved a desert with our main meal. A habit I still enjoy. A favourite would have to be roast lamb and chocolate pudding.

What was your family motto growing up - spoken or unspoken?

There was no real motto except maybe that on the Family Crest "Sit Vita Nominis Congrua" which my father would say "Live your life as your name".

'To be honest, think of others first, always treat others as you would like to be treated'
'Keep the Faith and work hard'

My Great Grandfather's advice "Every penny not spent, is a penny saved".

Later at my high school, St Aloysius College -"Born for Greater Things"!

With all this advice, what could possibly go wrong!

My strongest belief in life has been that there is no such thing as coincidence, it's fate. It was meant to happen!

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

How do you think that family motto has impacted you?

I have always tried to keep my parent's wishes for me and my future in front of my mind all my life. I and my wonderful wife, Sue, have been truly blessed all our lives. We have had good health, a wonderful family, and longevity . Also we have had the ability to work together in everything we did.

Who took care of you when you were little? How would you describe your relationship with those people?

I do not remember being looked after by anyone except my Mother. As she had 5 sisters and a brother, I do remember visiting with many family groups as Bill and I grew up.

What did your parents do for work?

My Mother, Josephine Renee (Joe) was born in an era when women were not expected to work. However, after the death of her father, mother and older brother at separate times during the First World War in England, her situation as she grew up in Australia with her remaining sisters and little brother, changed dramatically.

As soon as she was old enough, she joined her sister as a phone receptionist at the Hotel Australia in Sydney. I gather that she stayed there until she married my father in 1927.

During the war in Sydney, she became the Licensee, and manager of her younger brother's hotel in Sydney, THE Carlton Club 44 Young St The Quay. After the war ended, and Dad came home, we moved to 2a Kent Rd, Rose Bay. I believe this was the first home the couple had ever owned. Mum never worked again or learnt to drive. She was always there for the three of us, kept a happy house, and cooked wonderful meals.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

My father, Bill, to his friends, Mr. Will in the business. When he came back from Ambon in the Pacific, went almost straight back as Managing Director in the Christie's business, along with his brother George. At that stage the three shops had grown from manufacturing and selling umbrellas to also including Army Service requirements, everything from uniforms to medals.

This part of the business had grown steadily since 1939 under my grandmother's directorship. The business had been started in 1895 by her husband, my Grandfather, that I had never known, and she continued as CEO until her death at 90, in 1963, a widow for 53 years.

It was shortly after Dad's return to the business that he decided to split off a portion of it and open a Scottish Heraldry shop, which he and Bill, my brother, started in King Street Sydney.

Dad became a kilt maker and bagpipe manufacturer, using kangaroo skin in the instrument. Soon after this the George Street store was sold and the building torn down, and Dad and Bill moved to lower George Street, near Circular Quay. That business thrived, until Bill closed it in 1994, 10 years after Dad's death in 1984.

It is interesting to note that I found a note book of Dad's that showed he had completed over 100 kilts in the last year of his life.

What's the most valuable thing your parents taught you?

That family is the most important collection of people in your life. As my mother and father had very large families, we had many uncles and aunts, and their families. Their stories and their histories have always been of interest to me.



How did you get along with your brothers and sisters?

My only brother, Bill, was 7 years older than I, so he was at school, and I had Mum to myself. As we got older, he had older mates, and I was left out of most of the games. I was always being told to "keep quiet" which probably made me more talkative!

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

Bill left school after passing his Intermediate and then went onto work with Dad, and when I got to high school, I was encouraged to go on to Leaving. I had no wish to go on to university. At 21, Bill went to London to see Queen Elizabeth Crowned and did some travelling in England.

At 25, I paid my own way to America to travel across the States to visit "Dude Ranches" to see if I could open my own in Australia.

So, although we loved each other, we were very different and could never really work well with each other. My wife now says we were like Chalk and Cheese!

What was your favourite family tradition growing up?

Christmas Day, with the smell of the pine tree in the lounge, putting all the decorations on the tree and next morning opening the presents. Then the great turkey lunch and special fruit pudding. Followed with an afternoon nap.

What role did religion play in your life growing up? Has that changed over the years?

Being a Catholic is very important to me. Going right back to my Great Grandmother, Catherine Stevens nee Larkins from Ireland who was forced to marry a Protestant when she arrived in Australia, as a pregnant convict. She had been raped by a guard on the ship, being brought to Botany Bay.

When her husband died, she immediately had all her children baptised again at St. Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. Mum and Dad were married there in 1927 and my brother and I were baptised there.

My first school was run by nuns at Edgecliff, and then later, when we moved to the hotel, I went to the Cathedral school for my First Communion. Soon after that I travelled all the way out to Point Piper by tram to Campion Hall, run by Jesuit Priests. Here I gained lifelong friends and a true understanding of what having a faith really meant to having a happy life.

My high school was at St Aloysius College at Kirribilli where I completed and rounded off my education.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

How did your family compare to friends and relatives?

We have never "compared" our friends or relatives one way or another. Sufficient to say that our parents had many friends that we visited or they visited us. Most of them were Army friends since the War.

As our family all grew up in the guest business, we all have a multitude of wonderful friends, most of whom were our guests or neighbours', over the 68 years we have lived in O'Connell.

Anything else you'd like to add about your childhood?

Further War Time Memories: Dad was moved to Bathurst Army Camp, and we all moved to the Royal Hotel, run by friends, the Nicholas Family. I remember watching the world go by through the wrought iron balustrade of my second floor bedroom, especially the horse drawn fire engine. It would come rushing by every time a large bell would start to ring, out of a tiny shed beside the main Gardens. As it made its way down William St., men would rush out of the shops and climb on board on their way to a fire. Some of them, still with their aprons on.



View from the Balcony of the Royal Hotel, Bathurst. The fire station was a tiny shed to the left of the picture, in the gardens.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

We stayed in Bathurst until after the Cowra Breakout occurred and arrived back in Sydney just before the Japanese submarine attack on the Harbour.

This is a very strong memory. Mum came rushing into our room, tripping over a train set my brother and I had laid on the floor. Then being carried down stairs and placed on a mattress under the Dining Table. We had a pencil rubber placed in our mouth (apparently to stop our teeth from shattering!) We then heard shells whining overhead and some loud explosions. I remember Mum kneeling beside the table, tearfully praying.



Next day Bill and I roamed the streets that were covered in broken glass and stood around with a bunch of other kids and looked into a huge hole in a front yard. Soon after that, I was up on Dad's shoulder watching a crane pull a miniature sub out of the Harbour. The year 1942.

Mum, Bill and I back in Sydney 1943

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

More childhood memories: The next home we moved to was 5 Manning Road. As mentioned, we lived on the ground floor of a 2-storey mansion that was set in a huge jungle of a garden. This garden was the most wonderful place for me to roam in whilst Bill was at school, full of hidden cubby houses, and secret games.



The whole area was used once to make a Propaganda War Film, with lots of soldiers, nurses and tomato sauce. The director must have hated the child that kept popping up during the filming!

That jungle was a great play area, and I remember it all very well. One memory is particularly strong. I had been given an Indian teepee tent for Christmas and had put it up in a secret place in the jungle. One day whilst playing with the little boy next door and his younger sister, we were sitting around talking, naked as Red Indians do, when suddenly I had my first ever erection. The little girl ran screaming for Mummy, closely

followed by her brother, and I was left wondering if it was fatal.

Soon after this my mother was given the job of Licensee of her younger brother's hotel "the Carlton Club" in Young St. Sydney, overlooking Circular Quay. I had the whole Botanical Gardens, just over Macquarie St to roam in, and would ride my scooter to watch the Newsreels at the Newsreel Theatre next to Wynyard Station.

Sadly, there was only a very small back veranda and no play area for me. So, every school holiday, from Prep school onwards, I was sent, first by plane and later by train, to Forbes in the Central West NSW to visit my Uncle John and Auntie Bebes- my mothers youngest sister, to their wonderful lucerne and sheep farm.

What a time I had there! So much so it changed my life completely. If it was to be at all possible, I was going to live on the land.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

We were in the Hotel when the War ended, and Dad came home in 1946. I only then found out that he was a Major in the Intelligence Corp, and had briefly been Commander of the Australian Camp in Ambon. He was present at the signing of the Peace on Ambon. He became the most important man in my life, and a truly wonderful Dad.



Dad home from Ambon at Wars End. My first real memory of him. C 1946

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



We have moved to the Hotel and the streets and the Botanical Gardens are my play area. This photo was in the Sydney Herald. My first Press Release. 1947

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



Mum and I C 1947

He really wasn't Santa!



GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



My 21st Birthday!

CHAPTER 4

SCHOOLING

Where did you go to school?

Elementary: Edgecliff Church School/ Campion Hall Point Piper

High school: St. Aloysius College, Kirribilli

1943-1947

As already mentioned, the first school I went to was run by the Nuns at Edgecliff. This entailed a long climb up from Double Bay to the top of Edgecliff Rd. The Nuns were dressed in black, with only their face and hands showing. I was always a bit wary of them, the hands could carry a nasty ruler, and in the office of the Head Nun, they had this statue of a guy nailed to a cross! They also had the same odd smell, perhaps from the laundry. The only sport I excelled in was marbles, and I don't remember much about the other children. However, my lasting memory is of a little boy I spent most lunches with talking over the fence to him through his bedroom window.

He told me he had a hole in his heart, and could not go to school. We talked about all manner of things, especially school. One day the window was shut, and the blind drawn. A nun told me a few days later the little boy was now an angel in Heaven.



Edgecliff Sacred Heart Nuns Primary School. C 1946

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

1947 -1952

When we moved to the Hotel in the city, I was transferred to St Mary's Cathedral School. Here most of the children were from displaced families from war torn Europe. Headmaster was Cardinal Gilroy, a majestic man dressed in red and black, with a quaint singsong voice. I made my First Holy Communion here, and finally became more interested in education. However, when one of the Italian boys jumped out of a classroom window, Mother moved me to a new school just opened, Campion Hall, at Point Piper.



First Intake Campion Hall 12th February 1947 I was enrolled on the 15th.



My cousin, Johnny Stevens, had been in the very first intake, and I followed a few days later. It was a truly wonderful place to be at. Father Scott, a very cultured Irishman was Head, helped by two other priests, Fr. Farmer was my favourite, and wonderful Geography teacher, Mr O'Ryan and a beautiful lady teacher, who we were all in love with. The only bad part of the change to Campion Hall was the long tram trip from the Quay to the foot of Point Piper, all the way past Double Bay where we had lived, and then the hike up the hill! Luckily the son of the Italian Ambassador was also a student, and his driver would pick up as many children and their bags as the huge American car could carry.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



Football at Campion Hall
By the colour of the jumpers, this was
before our first game! 1947

Cricket at St.Aloysius With Des by my side.
We do not look happy! C 1951



GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

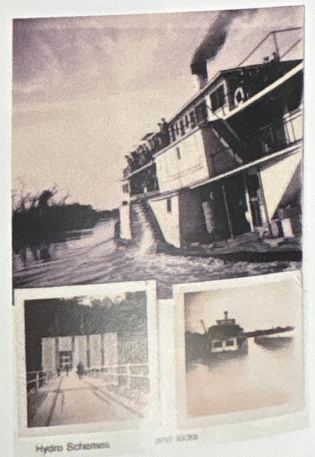
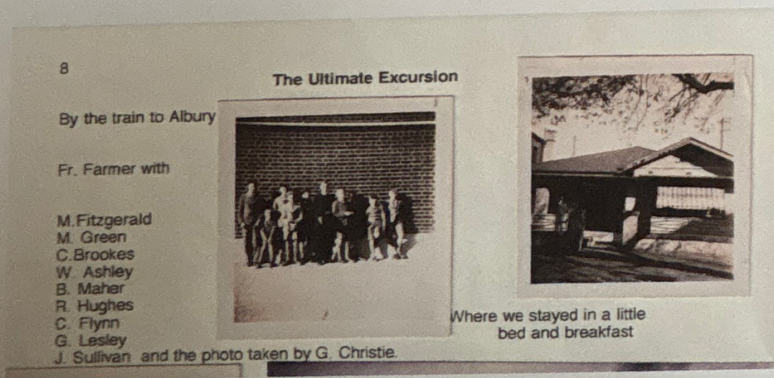
I enjoyed Geography most, but also was encouraged to put out a monthly school paper, which included all the school news. I also added a joke column taken from a book I had. The paper was suddenly withdrawn when I apparently, quite unknowingly, included a risqué joke!

Father Scott also arranged for the whole school to go to Classical concerts at the Sydney Town Hall, leaving me with a love of classical music, even now.

We had large Art exhibitions to raise money for the school, I even sold some of mine!

But best of all was an excursion for our class. We went by overnight Express to Albury. After a day there, we boarded a paddle steamer "The Gem" and went down the Murray River, getting off at locks and little country towns all the way to the South Australian border and Renmark. From there by bus and taxi to the mining town of Broken Hill. Here we visited the Zinc Works. We were billeted in all these places with Catholic families and made feel very welcome.

The final trip home was in the very modern Silver City Comet. (it is currently being restored at the Lithgow Railway works).



Wonderful Excursion down The Murray River, then to Broken and home. C 1949

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

Father Scott was the most effective educator for me. He had started Campion Hall to be a memorial for his brother, a Bomber Pilot in WW2. It was to be the Prep school for Riverview College, on the banks of the Lane Cove River. The Hall was a magnificent mansion overlooking the Harbour from the Bridge to the Heads.

As it had been requisitioned by the RAAF during the War, the gardens were covered with huts when we first arrived. When they were removed, we had wonderful play areas.

Unfortunately, Father Scott was always trying to raise enough money to make the school viable. He was assisted by many of the wealthy families with students there but harassed by the "Old Boys Union" of Riverview, who had not been interested in setting up a Prep School.

The School was closed a few years after we graduated, and with a broken heart, Father Scott left the priesthood, returned to Ireland, married, and had a family of his own.

I have one very strong memory of Campion Hall. "Sex and Financial Matters" were two subjects never mentioned in our family. I had no idea how we were financed. We always had whatever was needed, a small Hillman with a dickie seat for my brother and I and the dog. Always well clothed and well fed.

Sex or any passing reference just did not occur in my hearing anyway

So, it was with some trepidation we were invited to the headmaster's room two weeks before our final term. Inside "Scotty" had large posters of naked females and other unknown features.

What followed was a lecture, delivered red-faced but very clear and definite, of what was likely to occur in the future in our dealings with girls. The one thing that was impressed upon us, was that some of this never occurred until after marriage!



My Last final Group Photo at Campion Hall. 1950

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

1952

Feeling truly educated, I went on to go to St. Aloysius College, along with a couple of other mates. It was also a Jesuit School, and a brother school to Riverview. However, it was closer to home, and I had more rapport with the fellows who were coming as well.

The one drawback was that we had moved from the Hotel to 2a Kent Rd Rose Bay. This meant I travelled by tram into the city and then over the Bridge to Kirribilli.

I did very well in my first term report, but seem to steadily decline from there. However, I did pass my Leaving Certificate and enjoyed my time there, leaving in 1955.

I was never much good at school sports. Never was keen on cricket. The one time I managed to catch a football, I ran the wrong way. I was never fast at running or swimming, although I enjoyed surfing and tennis.

1954

I got my licence at 17 and had my brother's Hillman wagon the last year of school. A group of us, with girls from the local Loreto Convent, went to parties, beach and bush camps. We had all grown up as a group of friends, and all had a great time



without any heavy romance getting in the way. I quite often would not get back home till after 2am, having delivered everyone home first.

Tennis, swimming and dancing were our main activities, and lots of laughter.

My little Hillman Wagon that I had for the last Term of 1955.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



Leaving Class 1955 St.
Aloysius College

Who was your best friend in school and how did you meet them?

John (Des) White is still my "best friend". We came to college together. Have always watched each other's backs. He helped me start my business at the Shell Service Station in Mosman, and has been a true friend since. It was Des who drove our bus up from Sydney when we first started Yarrabin, and then took the guests back on a Sunday night. He also helped with the driving on weekend tours to Hill End and of the winter safaris to the Centre of Australia.

He wrote me many letters whilst I was away in America, telling me to "follow my dream".

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

In school, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Having spent all my holidays on the sheep and lucerne farm of my Uncle John and Auntie Babe's at Forbes, I always wanted to go on the land, and live on a farm.

My geography teacher at Prep School gave the class an assignment to list all the activities that occur in the United States of America that have or might have an effect on the Australian way of life.

This started me going through all our reference books to explore American Life. We were already used to U.S. magazines and films, with large U.S. cars being imported. I came upon one fact that truly excited me.

There were resorts set on cattle stations, and in farming areas called "Dude Ranches" where holiday makers from the cities would stay and enjoy country life with horse riding, mustering, all set in a luxury accommodation. Wow! Could that happen in Australia? A dream that started in 1947 and continued.

If you attended college or university, what did you study and how did you choose it?

I did not go to University, but after my first summer spent on the beach after leaving school I started working in the family business, "Christie's Umbrellas" with three shops in the Strand, George and Pitt Streets Sydney.

At the time we were living at Palm Beach in my Grandmother's holiday home having sold the home in Rose Bay. This meant an hour long bus trip to the City with Dad and my brother. I was at the Strand Arcade shop, under Dads brother George and Miss Hicks. She had worked for the firm since the early 1900's. If the till was short a penny, then we all had to stay back to find out who gave the wrong change. As it was always me, I offered to pay the difference, but no, we had to check on which sale the mistake occurred. At least it did make me very careful with money!

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

In 1956 Dad decided to take the Scottish Heraldry business from the main Firm and start out on his own with Bill and I.

He opened their first shop in King St, with a factory upstairs in the Strand Arcade. I went to the factory and learnt gold and silver embroidery. For part of that year, I made badges and band sashes. I even made a School badge for my jacket, but every time I wore the jacket it felt wrong. This badge was only given to the sport Captains of St.Aloysius, and I, on the other hand, had not appeared at much sport! I finally decided to take it off the jacket, frame it and hang it on the wall of my office, where it still is! Soon after this Dad admitted he always had wanted to go on the Land. Being the eldest son, when his father died in 1910, he was expected to go on and run the Family Business. He now thought to find a property that could be improved and thus save money in tax. I think now he also realised that I would not settle in the business, and realised I wanted to go on the land.

Bill and I went on a road trip north and west, checking out farms and reporting back, but most were far too expensive. Then we came across an advertisement for a 2500 acre farm near Bathurst- "Heavily timbered with Comfortable Cottage", the asking price 10 shillings per acre. The name was Yarrabin. That weekend, we drove to Bathurst, deposited my mother in the very rough homestead, with the wife, surrounded with wrecked cars and rubbish, whilst we kicked dirt and found a tiny patch of clover, in amongst heavily timbered country stretching into the next valley. Despite its very obvious rough condition, its proximity to Sydney, and the fact it was near the O'Connell village, where Mum and Dad had old friends, that was enough to encourage Dad to make an offer, which was accepted! We returned to Sydney and once the property settled, I was sent back up to Yarrabin to clean up and start clearing. I clearly remember that first weekend that we all came up, Dad in his Rover Sport, Bill in the Hillman, and me in a Land Rover that I had bought. It was only then that we all realised just how rough it really was! The wrecked cars were all gone, but there was a lot to do before we could expect to put stock on the place. However, it still felt great that we had our very own Farm!

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

CHAPTER 5

YARRABIN (THE EARLY YEARS) TO ARIZONA AND BACK!



When the family left me at Yarrabin, I realised that now I was on my own and to make this Farm work I really would have to get stuck into it.

Luckily the neighbours were wonderful, and especially the Cox's Family, who were old friends of Mum and Dad, as Mum used to bring my brother to the O'Connell Hotel for holidays in the 1930's. At those times she was met at the local railway station "Wambool" by

a horse and sulky for the trip to the Pub.

I started working for my next door neighbours Dick and Peg Savage. They had 1000 acre property "Briardale", running 3000 sheep surrounding Yarrabin on the North and East boundaries. They gave me a job as a roustabout at their next shearing. This was my first pay cheque which I spent on a flush toilet and septic tank. The previous one was a spade at the back door! Dick taught me all I know on how to survive on the land as I worked alongside him for the next 20 years.

They were all wonderful people. Watching over me, having me join them for meals, getting me out of bogs in the wet, and taking me to hospital when I was kicked in the chest by a horse.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

Tim Cox gave me a hand, helping me restore the old homestead. The first job was making the old cottage liveable. We managed to render the old concrete block walls and repaint the inside and out of the cottage.

We put down wooden floors and put in a tank for running water and closed in the outside veranda to make a dining room.

I really enjoyed my bachelor life. I got lots of letters from mates in Sydney, and then they started to come up for weekends and work with me. They enjoyed themselves so much, that old dream of mine started to take shape and started to become more and more possible.

A furniture store "Waltons" in Bathurst started a new promotion of "12 months interest free purchase". I thought this was a great idea, buying 5 chrome double bunks, and 10 good mattresses, blankets and linen. All of this filled our bedrooms and started the Guest Business.

Every month I paid one twelfth in cash. Many years later, a little old lady came over to me saying, "Mr Christie, you don't know me, but I worked for Waltons in the 60's and we had to juggle the books, for the whole year you paid for your beds, until the end when we refunded the interest". Just shows how naïve I was.

However, we now had room for all those who wished to come up.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



1962 Two school friends, Jinny and Liz, with Dad - a weekend visit to the very rough cottage that became Yarrabin Homestead.

Then suddenly my brother Bill joined me, closely followed by Mum's older sister, Auntie Cess, who had arrived in Sydney whilst we were living at the hotel. She and her husband Mike came from Tanzania (then known as Tanganyika). He was a vet and brought with them a pair of white Rhinos for the Taronga Park Zoo in Sydney. He looked after them as they came out on the deck of the ship. I remember being very disappointed when they, the Rhinos, were unloaded and they were grey, and not white! When Mike returned to Africa, Aunt Cess stayed with us at the hotel. She had been used to having servants and would sit in the lounge and clap her hands. Mum would yell in answer from the kitchen, "If you want something, come and get it yourself!" I never found out why she did not return to Africa with Mike, but she always said that the Mau Mau had forced her out. She was a truly wonderful person and spent time with all her siblings and their children before coming up to look after Bill and I.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

Just as she did, we got a request from the local school at Wisemans Creek, in the next valley, to take the teacher as a border. The little cottage, with two bedrooms and a sleepout was getting a bit full! However, we made do, and it was wonderful to have a woman about the house.

All went well until Bill and Aunt Cess were driving back from Sydney and ran head on to our border, the teacher, on the Wambool Road. Luckily no one was badly injured, just shocked and bruised. However, soon after that Cess decided to return to Sydney for good.

This was a very busy time in my life. Bill and I were then next called back to work with Dad, as he found he could not afford to keep us just clearing the block he had bought.

On the way back to Sydney, I bought a caravan and leased a small Shell Petrol Station in Mosman to have my own business and to rent the caravans from.

That Christmas I borrowed 2 other vans from country owners and added them to the fleet. By the end of the year, I had 5 vans on the road.

The business started to run well, and I would leave a staff member to look after it whilst I had to deliver another company's van to Melbourne or Brisbane, or go up to Yarrabin if there were some guests booked in.

Once we had got the little cottage renovated, furnished and generally spruced up we started taking bookings. Then my mother and I would drive up each weekend when we had some guests booked to join us. We had bought three quiet horses, and I would take our guests for a ride through the white gum forest, and across to the next- door farm for a visit. Sometimes, we would assist in mustering the Savage Family sheep. Quite often if we had 3 guests to ride, I would run and walk beside the riders. Our first guests were mostly from the Qantas building. My mate, Des, had put our first brochure up on each floor. This resulted in many of the young Qantas workers joining us and filling the house.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

In April 1963, our very first guests for Yarrabin Guest Property were the two travel agents that booked my trip to the US, plus two young neighbours, Tim Cox and Lin Savage and a couple of school mates from Sydney, Jinny Burns and Des White. Also, to cover the story for a Sydney Magazine a reporter, Jill Robertson and photographer, David Miller.

Unfortunately, my grandmother, Dad's mother, passed away the week before and Bill and I returned to Sydney for the funeral, and left Tim and Des to run the show until we returned Sunday.

1962 - Heading to the States

An American friend of my brother visited our home in Sydney, and whilst there mentioned that his father had an Ice and Heating Oil Business in New York, and always had trouble keeping staff the whole of Summer. Without much thought, I suggested that I would be happy to work through the Summer for my board and keep, not having any idea just what that entailed! However, I had decided that somehow I had to get this dream I had of starting a Dude Ranch in Australia out of my head and see if it really could be done, and this perhaps may be a way to get there. We later received a letter from his mother to say her son's bedroom was available whilst he was away and they would "love to have me visit".

By this time the Shell Garage at Mosman was ticking along quite well and the Caravan Hire business was building, and somehow I thought it could keep going whilst I was away. With hindsight I have realised just how selfish that was. My father had to take over the running of the business, and he already had too much to do as it was. Whilst I was able to pay my way onto a Ship to Miami via Tahiti and the Panama Canal, and pay for the open return flight. I blissfully took off in search of my dream! Of course as it turned out, Dad let the station lease run out. He put off the staff, and returned the caravans to the farm. He did not mention any of this until I was on my way home at the end of the year. The station site, on the top of Parri Rd. is now a bus stop!

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

When I reached Miami, I found I could deliver a car to New York and be paid to do it. With three other passengers who had got off the ship with me, we were given a beautiful, bright pink Oldsmobile convertible. It was a huge vehicle, and due in New York (1400 miles away) in only 4 days! I thought that could be done, and proceeded to enjoy Miami. We wondered why the car seemed to be known around town, as we received a few hand waves.

Not worried, we started our run up the coast, sleeping each night on the bench seats, with two in the boot. The first time we had to fill it with petrol, I thought it must have a hole in the tank as it was taking forever. However, my passengers paid for it. Whilst there we asked for a map, or directions to the AAA. They sent us to Alcoholics Anonymous!

We had breakfast in the deep South. "*How U lak aggs?*" also took us a while to figure out. I had a wonderful trip, as it was a beautiful car to drive, arriving in N.Y. on time. We went to the address to deliver the car, and I was immediately invited in. However, as the gorgeous girl was only in a transparent slip, I asked if I could have my \$100 deposit back so I could be on my way! I might add that \$100 was all I had.

I then went on to Malverne on Long Island and found my address for the Summer, arriving June 1st. I was enthusiastically taken in by the Buckley family, and immediately felt at home. There were 9 letters waiting for me, much to the surprise of my hosts. I started on the job the next day, and after two days received \$22. I was staggered, as I thought I was to work for my keep and board. My bedroom was in the basement of their home. It was also where the father had his own tv to watch baseball and football. He spent the whole summer explaining both games in detail, and at the end of it, I still had no idea!

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

On my days off I did get to explore New York, meet some wonderful people, and get to visit a few of the summer camps that occurred in the hills west of the city. One person I had an interview with was the Trade Minister for Australia. He was very intrigued with our ideas of starting up a "Dude Ranch". As far as we knew, a commercial attempt had never been tried. A few years later, he stayed with us at Yarrabin. He wished us luck, and mentioned that competition would be a good thing, if it happened! It would get the whole concept known. As it turned out we had visits from three different groups in our first year, all finding out from us how to start up. Now of course "Farm Stays" are common throughout Australia.

The day after I arrived, I started my job in the Ice house, at 7 degrees below freezing. The ice blocks were delivered each morning, and came sliding in, 5 foot long, by 3 foot wide and 1 foot thick. We would catch them, and swivel them onto a conveyor, and feed them into a crusher that then bagged and delivered out the other end. From there we would load the trucks that took them away to vendor machines all along the Long Island beach front. It took half the month before I was able to go in the truck to assist with loading the vendors. These were like small square rooms, lined inside with a circular system of conveyors. One time whilst loading the ice, a small arm came in feeling around for some ice. I went over, growling loudly and made to lightly grab the arm. It was quickly removed and a child was heard running to the beach, "Mummy there's a bear in the house".

As it turned out, I did have every weekend off, and during that time I was introduced to a family who were interested in investing in Australia. I was asked to lunch at their 5th Avenue Apartment, served by a dark waitress with beautiful china, gold napery and a glorious view of Central Park. The next weekend I was on their yacht and introduced to Morris and Stanley Rosenfeld, the official photographers, for the America's Cup. It's hard to believe that all this then found me on a yacht on the 19 September, flying along between The US Presidents Frigate, right beside the Australian Gretel as she won the second last race. What a commotion, and

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

celebration! I did wind up with that winning photo, and the first family bought up big in Melbourne, and got in touch with my family. It was a wonderful time. Unfortunately Gretel lost the next day's race and I hitched my way back to New York.

By the end of the month I had finished my promised summer in the Ice house, and I was on the road again, looking for a way to get to LA and on to Arizona. I answered an ad for a driver to San Francisco. He had a Thunderbird Convertible, and had never driven out of a city! I offered to do just that, provided we could go via the Seattle World Fair. He thought it was "a bit out of the way" but agreed. He could not get it cheaper! He was a computer programmer, who spent nearly the whole trip explaining what he did, and I still am not the wiser. By the third day he thought it looked easy driving out on the open road, and wanted to take over. At the very next bend, which he went round on the wrong side, we almost came face to face with a truck. I took over and drove the rest of the way. Each night I slept on the floor of his motel room and paid for my own meals. We spent two days in Seattle at the World Fair, and then went down the coast road to his university. It was a wonderful trip right across the States, with the most beautiful scenery.

I left most of my luggage with a friend, and got out on the road to Wickenburg, where I had been offered a job. I got three really long lifts, the last with a woman who never stopped talking. So much so that I fell asleep and woke up in Phoenix! I thanked her and hitched back to Wickenburg. When I arrived at Remuda Ranch, I was immediately welcomed into the family, by Sophie, the mother and her sons, Dana and John and John's wife Maureen. This was the start of a wonderful month, filled with being shown and taking part in all the action of a very old and respected Dude Ranch.

Whilst working on the Burden Family Guest Ranch in Wickenburg, Arizona, I was given the job of driving a 4WD pack vehicle into the desert for a group of VIP guests, riding into the Humbug Gold Mine area with Dana Burden, my boss and Pete

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

Fletcher, the wrangler. Given a map, a compass and a truck full of overnight requirements to set up camp in a particular canyon, and prepare dinner, complete with whiskey and ice, in the middle of nowhere. I had quite an eventful trip to get there, including the back doors bursting open and tipping half the load out! However, all was set up and ready by nearly sunset, when I noticed a dust cloud moving west, away in another canyon. Guessing it was the horse party going the wrong way, I grabbed the rifle, climbed the dividing hill, and fired off a couple of warning shots. The dust stopped, then started again returning towards the camp site, arriving later with great jubilation and relief. A great night was had by all. When the party arrived back at the ranch the next night, I was named an Arizona Scout and received an enormous tip from the guests, and a framed citation. Nothing was ever said about who was in the wrong canyon!

Whilst working at the Ranch, Dana got the local newspaper to interview "the Aussie" who was gaining experience with the family. When I read that story now I cannot believe how I had the whole dream so clearly in my mind, right down to the first brochure we would produce, and how the business would progress from there. Just how it was going to happen, I had not a clue! The Burden family wanted me to look after the place over the off season, but I really felt I had better get home.

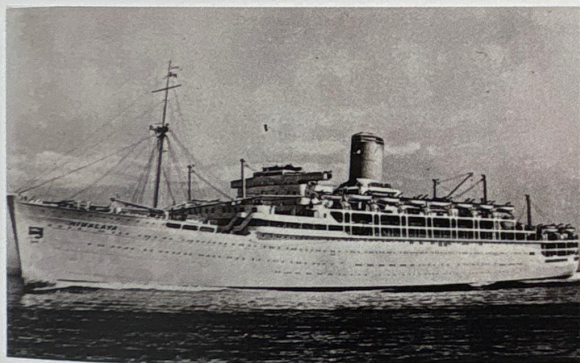
My family by this time had had to close the Service station and give up the lease. My 5 caravans had been towed back to the farm and 2 of them given back to their owners. Dad must have had a terrible time organising everything. He had not mentioned any of it in the letters I received. I decided to take a break and get home by Christmas. With the help of that tip that I had received from the guests, I changed my homeward airfare for a sea voyage, to include Japan and the Philippines, on "The Himalaya", and I was able to book a 4-berth cabin, with a porthole, no less. I was told by the agent that it was the last berth available until the 3rd of March. The booking on the Himalaya was made for departure 25th November, and I caught the Greyhound Bus for San Francisco.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

1963 "The Himalaya"

When I got onto the ship, which was much bigger than the JVO that I had travelled to the States on, I was in a much better 4 berth cabin! As it turned out, two nights out of San Francisco, the other two cabin passengers arrived back quite drunk, and started picking on the 65- year-old who was the other passenger! Somehow, I cannot remember how, I was able to get the drunks into bed and the next day requested another cabin. The two of us wound up on C Deck in First Class with our own ensuite! "The Himalaya" was where I met Susan Hocking, from Hobart

Tasmania. I have always believed there is no such thing as coincidence, and now you can see why!



My first impression of life on "The Himalaya" was how many young people were already on board, and one particular group of guys gathered around two girls caught my eye. A couple of nights later I got to meet the girls whilst we were playing cards. That led to another fella and I organising to hire a Mini

Moke and tour Hawaii with the girls named Sue and Nette. We all had a great day, so good in fact, that with the help of a MaiTai cocktail on the wharf bar, we nearly missed the ship, just making it as they were about to pull the gangway off.

It was a wonderful sea trip over to Japan, however, I did not see a lot of the girls. That is until we were just sailing into Yokohama. Both of them sidled up on either side of me as I was watching the ship slide into the harbour. "We have heard that you intend to get off the ship and travel down through Japan to get back on board the next Port." That's right. "Could we come with you?" I explained I had little money for the trip and was going Japanese all the way. They assured me they would pay their own way, and that was exactly what they wanted to do. Wow what an offer, I could not refuse!

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

All three of us travelled the length of Japan and had the most wonderful trip. We stayed each night in a Japanese inn, the hosts always thinking these were my women. We were shown one room with one futon on the floor, which the girls immediately grabbed, and I slept in my sleeping bag, on the floor. We ate wonderful meals, either by ordering from photos or in the inns. Visited temples, and beautiful gardens, and travelled by fast train south to catch the ship in Kobe

Needless to say, the rest of our sea trip was very enjoyable. When we arrived in Sydney I had to borrow five pounds from Sue to be able to get off the ship. I had not a penny left and I was not sure if my parents knew I was coming home as I had not heard from them before I left the States. As it turned out, the family were all on the wharf and a wonderful homecoming followed. However, I very quickly was back in the "Firm" and worked the next year for Dad and Bill in the Scottish Heraldry. We also took some weekend bookings up at the farm, but my main activity was to visit Highland Gatherings with one of my vans fitted out as a shop. I managed to get down to Tasmania once and met Sue's family. She also managed to fly up twice to visit Yarrabin and stay with my family.

On Sue's first trip to Yarrabin she was chaperoned by the Cox family, my neighbours, and stayed with them whilst we explored the farm. During that visit we had the Cox's over for dinner and I proudly showed them my first brochure. We were sitting around the fire in the lounge and everyone silently read right through the pamphlet, then suddenly the youngest started to laugh, then everyone started laughing their heads off. In amongst the tears Sam, the father, asked "Where is this place?" - "Here" I gasped! I realised then I had more work to do before we could really expect people to enjoy my "Dream".



YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

On Sue's second trip to Sydney, after many letters back and forth, just before she was heading home, we celebrated with a Japanese Meal. I had my mothers engagement ring in my pocket, but could not muster up the courage to interrupt the meal, and ask the question. Just as we were walking back home, we passed a large red telephone box. I could not resist it, and bundled a confused Sue in and finally asked if she would do me the honour of marrying me.

1964 Marrying the love of my life!

On the 8th February 1964 we were married in the Catholic Cathedral in Hobart. The Luncheon Reception was at the family home and I met so many relatives I had trouble remembering one from the other.

Afterwards, Sue and I, Des, my best man, my brother Bill, and Nette, our bridesmaid, all still in our best gear, flew to Sydney where another evening reception was held at my family home in Kirribilli. We finally got to our Motel at 2am, thrilled and quite exhausted!

Sue, my wonderful, patient wife is the greatest blessing of my life. Together we have been a most successful partnership that has achieved a lifetime of satisfaction. She is the most positive person I have ever known. I tend to be a pessimist, and therefore slightly negative! Those very qualities have resulted in powerful results -a successful business that gathered 1000s of happy guests, many of whom became friends, and our four girls have all grown successful in their own lives. I have often said that Sue is my best mate, financial advisor, organiser, superb cook, and wonderful host. On top of all that, she sews beautifully. All the children and grandchildren bring their gear to be refashioned or repaired.



GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



8/2/1964 Our Wedding in Hobart with Sue's parents Bill and Mabs Hocking.

1964 When Sue and I first started to run Yarrabin together, on our return from our honeymoon, our first weekend at home in the little cottage was delightful! That first Saturday night, sitting in front of a cosy fire in the lounge, Sue suddenly said, "Well what are we planning to do tonight?" I was a bit surprised - I thought we were enjoying being at home! "But I always go out on a Saturday night," she added. Lucky for me every weekend after that one, we started receiving guests to keep us busy. We were only able to accommodate 10 guests, and when that happened Sue and I had to move out of the house and back into our Caravan, parked at the back door. Everyone was so enthusiastic about their holiday, it gave us great heart to carry on. Our most satisfying feelings with our life spent at Yarrabin, is the thousands of guests we have had who became members of the family and had so many happy holidays with us. It very quickly made Yarrabin a very special part of our lives.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



Our first ad in the Herald

Once we had established our Guest Property business, our dream was to provide a country holiday for our guests. We planned to provide a comfortable bedroom with its own shower and toilet, with three well cooked meals in the homestead dining room with plenty of lounge and recreation space for the guests to enjoy.

From very small beginnings, and by ploughing all the income back into the business, my family has operated Yarrabin Guest Property from 1963 to its closure in 2023.

The first motel in Australia was built in Bathurst in 1956, and we decided to use their same rate to charge for accommodation which was 3 pounds 5 shillings for overnight and breakfast. For this we supplied lunch, dinner, bed and breakfast plus a horse ride if wanted! When Australia went decimal in 1966, we were charging \$7.50 a day. I still remember driving into Bathurst, after our first paying guests, thrilled I had our first bank!

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

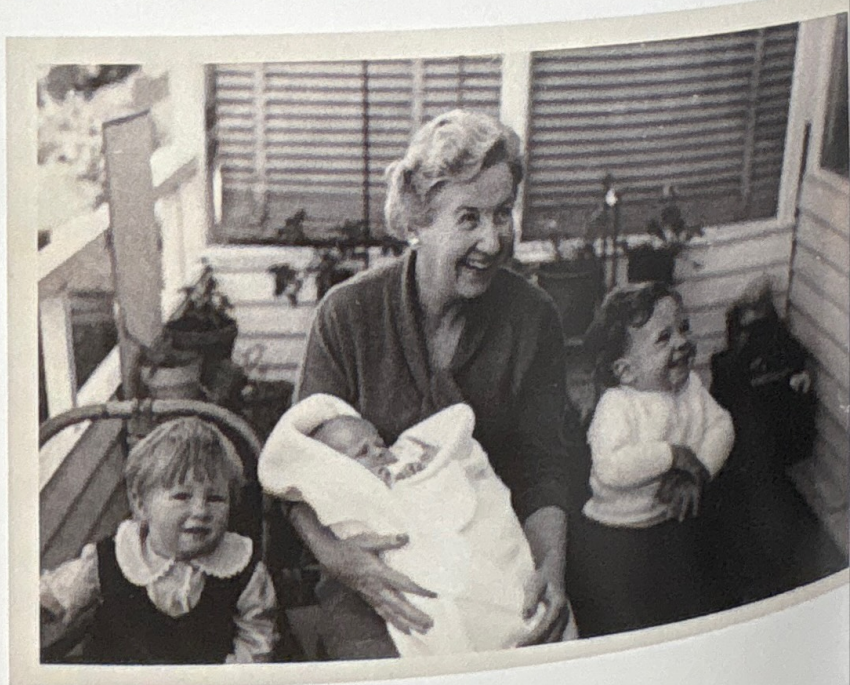
Expanding Yarrabin...in more ways than one!

We started building our first cabin, complete with its own shower and toilet. When it was finished, we could much better provide family accommodation. Sue thought we should get a builder for Unit 2, which she wanted completed before our first child was due in December.

The next project was building a bunk house at the rear of the main homestead to accommodate our "singles". Whilst constructing it, a guest, who happened to be a builder, asked if I was building a tank stand? I apparently had too many piers. The second half of that building was not finished until the late 60's.

The next cabin to build was a two room unit which I managed to complete for us to move into just as our second daughter arrived in 1966. We immediately started on Unit 4, and after that the last two units were completed. The last was looking over our creek.

Josephine Christie (my mum)
with 3 of her Grandchildren.
Annie, Kate and my niece
Lynn Christie (daughter of my
brother Bill). C 1966



YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

When we got pregnant with our third child, I thought I had better get started on our own home. This meant a rather strange trip along William St in Bathurst, visiting every bank to raise a loan. Every one, except the last, had the same outlook on our business. Would it survive and would it pay the loan back? One manager said to me "If you wanted money to buy sheep for the farm, that would be easy. Do you really think people would come to stay on your farm?" Of course, I did! Finally, I got to the Rural Bank. I had a plan and a quote for \$24000 for a builder. Yes, he would lend us \$12000. But that is only half! With that I went home and built the house that we all moved into just as Trishy was born in 1968.

I must admit we used second grade hardwood, and the guests helped me stand the frames each weekend. During our lifetime I managed to assist at the build of 3 homes, and actually built 16 others, mostly cabins, the last with the help of our youngest daughter, Jo, when she was 21. We built a great kit home for her at our front gate, and called it Tiggerton, named after the village next to Menmuir in Scotland where my Great Grandfather was born.

If you could go back and pick a new profession, what would it be?

I would not change anything or have any other profession than what we did. Hospitality has always been the main driver of our interests, and interestingly has been instilled into our children. In April 1964 we celebrated the first birthday of Yarrabin with dinner at The Alouette Restaurant in Sydney. It was a great gathering of our first guests and our family, and was a true milestone for the business.



Cutting the Cake at Yarrabin's First Birthday. April 1964
at the Alouette Restaurant, Sydney

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

In July 1964 because of a quiet winter, we decided to take a three week safari into the "Red Centre". We went in our brand new Nissan station wagon with 2 staff and two paying guests, six altogether. With the request to bring some tin food with them, meant that they all bought baked beans. Something we can never face now! With all the camping gear, and the dirt roads, we suffered at least 3 flat tyres. Even so, the whole trip was a great success, especially being able to camp right beside Ayers Rock and to climb it with no designated path to the cairn on the peak.

On that first trip we bought our first paintings from the sons of the great artist, Albert Namatjira, Oscar, Ewald and Gabriel Namatjira. Over the next two years we also managed to find the Artists Camp of Maurice and Keith, Albert's grandson. Unfortunately, at the last one, we found a ring of painters passing a grog bottle around the fire, and one painting the background, the next, the trees, and the last, Keith, signing!

These were the first of four trips that followed each July, the next with our minibus and station wagon with 14 guests. We had so many returning guests we used the minibus to take occasional weekend trips to Hillend and area, camping on a friend's property. The bus was also used to bring guests up and back to Sydney each weekend.

Horse riding was still the main attraction, which meant that we were always booked out for school holidays with families.

By 1971 all our accommodation was built and we could now, depending on room breakup, welcome some 34 guests.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

At this time the O'Connell Hotel came up for sale. As it was very popular with our guests, and a community venue, we joined with two local families to buy it. After the first three years our partners got cold feet, and we had to buy them out.



This meant that Sue and I were trying to be in two places at once, with Sue cooking for the hotel Saturday smorgasbord, and for all the Yarrabin guests as well. In the meantime, I was renovating the building, and getting it ready to be leased. We finally leased it out in 1975 and sold it in 1981.

Rank the following in order of importance

1. Family
2. Work
3. Health
4. Religion

Which word do you most associate with your work?

Fulfilment.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



Owen and Patty's wedding, surrounded by a close group of staff and guests, with Sue at the front. C 1968 with Peg and Dick Savage at the back.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



New Year Eve (1969) was the time for a great Party, and all our young guests became great mates often making group bookings.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



Horse riding was always the greatest attraction. We started with three, and then our rides twice a day needed 15. We would take a slow ride in the morning, and the faster ride after lunch.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



The dawn muster-getting the mob in for a day's riding.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



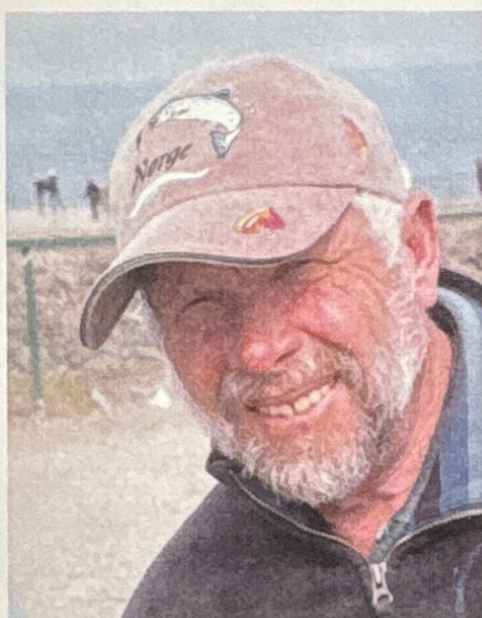
We had some 15ks of trails through the white gum forest for the horse riders. They were planned to be large circles, so that the Horses were never sure when they were on the way home.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

A celebration of the life of

JOHN BENSON WHEELER

10 November 1946 - 3 February 2015



Johnny Wheeler-An English Backpacker came as a guest in the 60's and stayed as staff and then came back again as farm hand on Menmuir in the 70's. Got homesick and returned to England. The next summer he rang from Perth and asked if he could come home.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



The Jackson Family Reunion around the Forest Dam.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



We always waved "Good Bye" as our guests left on a Sunday evening.

CHAPTER 6

LOVE, YARRABIN and MENMUIR

What do you think is the key to a successful relationship?

Absolutely my wife's patience, clear thinking, understanding of other people's feelings, along with the fact that we have always talked over every major decision, and agreed on it, or not. If there was any hesitation, we would agree to leave it. Her welcoming personality always shines through with a smile whenever she meets anyone. Her telephone voice always has a smile in it, and being a very cultured voice, people often ask if she was born in England! She was born in Launceston, Tasmania.

During our school years, we both made lifelong friends. Just after school I moved with a group enjoying whatever was on offer at the time. I had a group of 6 mates, male and female, that really had a wonderful time after school, without any relationships becoming too serious. This was the 60's, and was an entirely different ethos to what seems normal now! Those 6 mates are still my closest friends.

Sue has travelled the world and met friends all along the way. At 18 she flew to New Zealand and worked in retail, as a waitress and sales assistant. She returned to Australia working in Sydney, Brisbane and Hayman Island, returning home to Hobart for her 21st birthday, and next day left for 3 years exploring Britain whilst working for Australia House for Trade Publicity. Sue went on travelling extensively in Europe, buying a car with friends. Then onto America with a girlfriend. They spent 99 days on a Greyhound bus touring the States and Canada. Lucky for me they caught the same boat back to Australia! You can see why I was most attracted to this gorgeous girl!

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

What's the bravest thing you've done?

We started Yarrabin Guest Property. In the first four years we got involved with the Bathurst Tourist Association, I was President of the Bathurst Festival for two years, on the Committee to establish the Olympic Highway and president of the Chamber of commerce. We also ran tours for the Railways to Hillend and District tours for Ansett Airways. All of this promotion led to Yarrabin becoming financially viable, and better known. By the end of the first four years we were finding that Yarrabin was booking out in its own rite, and we did not have to do any special promotions. If we needed a break we handed over to a couple of past guests to take over and run the business for us.

This occurred in 1971, just as we had bought the O'Connell Hotel, with the help of two local families as partners. We were already booked to take the children to Europe. Three of our guests, Barb, John and Peter ran the hotel until we came home. The business at Yarrabin was looked after by Betty and Ross and their children, who moved into our home. They ran it for a year, when we came home in September, we moved into the hotel. At the end of that year Betty and Ross bought their own property nearby and started a guest farm for kids.

Menmuir

In 1976 the property on our border came up for sale. This was the one I worked on as an 18 year old, and we often would ride on it and help muster the sheep. The guests were keen for us to buy it, but realised we did not have the finance. They suggested we ask for it, which we did. Amazingly, some 20 families put up enough cash for us to go to the auction and we were the highest bidder. Over the next couple of years we paid everyone back with credit on their holiday stays.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

Once we got possession of "Briardale" which we called "Menmuir", we rented the homestead to some friends, and asked a neighbour, Clive, to help us run the farm, which at that time had 3000 sheep on it. I really felt that my main calling was the Farmstay and I was not cut out to be a grazier. When Jodi, our youngest, finished her training at the Orange Agricultural College, Clive and I wound up our partnership, but kept a wonderful life long friendship.

Menmuir has been our family home ever since, and whilst we thoroughly enjoy our travels, there is no place like home!



We trailed the Oats out across the bare earth, to give each sheep a chance to get a feed, during the drought of 1980.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



Crossing the Bridge on the main road with help from David Howard and others

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



Clive Drown doing a Shearing Demo. A man who has been on the land all his life, a neighbour, wonderful friend and farm partner.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

CHAPTER 7

YARRABIN, FRIENDSHIPS and TRAVEL

In 1981 we handed over to Max and Cherrie and family to allow us to take the children, now 16, 14, 12, and 10. to Greece, Europe and came home through America, with a quick trip back to Remuda. It was a wonderful family trip. The kids were all old enough to really take it all in. Jodi even remembered the Tower of Pisa, from the first trip we had done when she was 3 and where it was, as I was approaching it, in the wrong lane!

In 1985 whilst out on a ride, I mentioned to a couple as they were wanting to leave Sydney and move to "the Bush", would they be interested in running Yarrabin, they got very excited. David had been a guest for many years, as he had come for all his school holidays since his 12th birthday, then had gone on being a steward on a Greek tourist ship. Jacquie, his partner, was so excited about my offer. She flew down to the kitchen to see Sue, whilst I was still unsaddling the horses. Because we had not talked over the whole idea, Sue got very upset, she was not ready to move on, and I had quite a time talking it all right through with her. We spent the next year working with David and Jacquie, and they leased the business in March 1986, with an option to buy. However, we have always been involved, as we have lived at Menmuir, which is right next door, only a couple of clicks down the road !

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

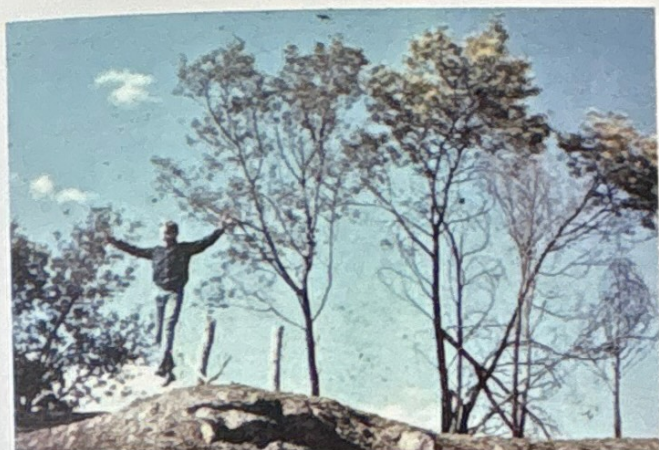


A typical Bush Bar-B-Q, with David and Jacquie Ross and guest Leslie on the right.

From a letter sent by Paul King, a guest of ours from the early 60's:

"I think it was 1969 or perhaps 1968. Yarrabin was entering a 'float' in the Bathurst festival. Gavin thought seeing as Yarrabin was the Aboriginal word for ghost gums, an indigenous theme was deemed appropriate. On the back of a box trailer a 'gunyah' was built from Yarrabin's plentiful timber supply. To add extra authenticity, John Parkes, the resident Yarrabin rouseabout, Paul King and David Howard were painted in theatrical brown make-up. The smell was pretty bad. The trailer was hitched to the Yarrabin bus and off we went on 'walkabout' into Bathurst. During the parade, David and I stayed 'camping' in the gunyah, while 'Parkesy' roamed the streets threatening all and sundry with authentic wooden Aboriginal spears. Back home at Yarrabin we couldn't wait to rid ourselves of the make-up. I remember it well!"

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



Paul King, on holidays, levitating!

Johnny Parkes came to us first as a guest, but as he lived in Bathurst he came out so often, we employed him, he was very popular, and very good with the horses.



GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

Des, my best mate from high school, was always there to assist me on Yarrabin. He mentioned once that he was in a group buying into a lottery, and if he won, he would lend me enough money to assist with getting the guest property up and running. The very next week they won some 12000 pounds, a fortune then. I was so pleased for him. As time passed nothing was mentioned. I was not upset and thought really, I could not expect him to remember his generous offer. Many years later he admitted that another "friend" had told him that I was too much of a risk at the time. He was correct of course. I had a dream, and few could see that it might work.

Aside from your closest friend, who else was/is an influential person in your life? Why have you chosen that person?

My father had the most influence on my life. His strong beliefs, quiet support for anything I did and general outlook on life has always had its effect on me. Unfortunately, I have not had the calm temper that he had, but I have always tried to think of others, and helped them if I could, as he used to. His forte was to be able to see in advance what was going to be needed and quietly make moves to have it happen. When he died in 1984 I was left with a huge hole that I have never been able to fill. My mother, being quite strong willed, also had an effect on how I think and react. She looked after my brother and I right through the war time, whilst Dad was away, which would not have been easy. They had also been married just before the 1930 Great Depression and that time made a lasting impression. I clearly remember how small, and yet so strong, as mum strode around the Bar of the hotel yelling "Time gentlemen please, Last drinks." as she tried to close the Hotel at 6pm, which was the law at the time. She died only 21 months after Dad, as she missed him greatly.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



Our last bus, a 15 seater, used to bring guests from Sydney every weekend, and took two winter tours into the Centre and Ayers Rock.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



Seven couples who made the first group that set up Yarrabin Wilderness Lodges, and helped to conserve the forest area.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



Gav and John Brieger enjoying a winter ride. The Brieger's were one of our first families to come to Yarrabin and their sons and their grandchildren still have a lodge in the Forest.

CHAPTER 8

CHILDREN

Describe each of your children in 3 words.

Annie - Capable, Loving and Strong Willed

Katie - Creative, Thoughtful and Loving , very like Sue

Trishy - High Achiever, Very Capable and Loving

Jo - Sensitive, Capable, Thoughtful and loving, and very like me.

All four of the girls grew up as two sets of twins, looking after each other and playing beautifully together.

What was your proudest moment as a parent?

Watching our girls attain adulthood, and their careers. We are very proud of their achievements. They are so supportive of each other and have bought their children up with the same values that we have all enjoyed. We have been very blessed that they all enjoy each other's company and we have had many large families get together. One being the Christmas Cruise in 2011 after the sad passing of Annie's husband, Graeme Phillips. Another being a 3 day Cruise we took for my 80th birthday and there have been many others. One of the great moments of being a parent is when the GrandChildren, and the Great Grand Children start arriving and add to our wonderful Family.

Who do you think your children take after?

All of them take after their mother, Sue, and people say they all look like her. Jo is very like me in her temperament, and outlook on life.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

What's the best thing about being a parent?

Having four wonderful daughters, all of whom are always around us. Their children, 6 of the 9 grew up near the farm, and now, our first three great grandsons have arrived.

Having three of the girls and their families live nearby has been a true blessing. We feel they will always be there for us. So much so, we have divided the property "Menmuir" into five blocks, one 25 acre Homestead block for us to live the rest of our lives on, and four equal blocks, one for each of the girls to work and live on as their own. Katie, our second eldest does not want to take up her block yet as she lives in Sydney, has a large Caravan business with her husband Andrew, and their son and two daughters living in Sydney. However, it is wonderful that we see them all very often during the year, as they all take the opportunity to visit. Sue and I use Katie's block to run a small mob of cattle on, to keep our hand in, and give us a reason to stay on the Land.

SCHOOLING & TRAVEL

All four of our girls went first to our local little primary school in the village of O'Connell, about 4km down the road from our front gate. It was so small we had to send Katie at 4 years old, to keep it open. This actually meant that she had to repeat Year 3, a fact she has never quite forgiven us for! However, as it turned out, it was a very good start for all their learning lives.

When we went as a family on our first Overseas trip ten years after we had started Yarrabin, we made sure the children took some books from school, as we planned to be away for more than 8 months. I told them they could only take what they could carry themselves, which meant that Jodi, at three, had to decide between a pillow or a Panda Bear. She finally selected the Bear.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

One highlight of that trip was visiting the salt mines in Salzburg .Every level of the mine was joined by long wooden bannisters. Wonderful to slide down, except they landed you in the Souvenir shop, which was hard to get out of due to a large Austrian guard standing by the door. Finally we were put on the train and shot out into the open.



Little Jodi and Sue were not able to join us as Jo was too short at the time . However Trish took Jo back there when they were doing their European trip in the late 80's. As mentioned earlier, we had to come back earlier than planned from that trip, but we still had a wonderful time touring and camping thru Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Europe and England, and returned via the USA, visiting the Ranch in ARIZONA. It was wonderful watching the children enjoying the adventure, absorbing the towns, History and the people along the way.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



1974. Our first trip overseas and on to America and the Grand Canyon. We visited Remuda Ranch as well.

The children would play with the children in the many camps we visited, and always seemed to be able to communicate with all the different languages. It was truly wonderful to watch! In 1980 we were able to take three months off, and take the girls on another world trip. Firstly to Greece, then England, Spain, Portugal, and across to Tangiers. This time we hired a Camper Van. This meant that on our return home, and after the first week of school, Annie declared that if we did not send her to Boarding School in Sydney, she would leave home! I pointed out that if we did, she would be leaving home anyway. She was amazed at how far ahead she was to the kids at school, after the trip.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

So started secondary school for the first of our four girls. The first school Sue contacted asked if we had enrolled the children at birth. No, we had not actually considered it then! "Oh well, there is no room here!" I asked Sue to try another school where I remembered my cousins had gone to. Here we got a very much better result. They always kept some space for country children and would love to interview them. So it resulted in three of the girls finishing their secondary schooling at Kincoppal Sacred Heart Convent at Rose Bay in Sydney. Because they were boarders, whenever they did not have time off to come home, they would stay with my parents in Kirribilli, or with friends in Sydney. Sue and I missed them terribly. This was the hardest thing about it all. Trishy preferred to finish her schooling in Bathurst, and went on to the Teachers College, which later became Charles Sturt University, and she went on to be the youngest school Principal in NSW, at only 22. It was wonderful to have her at home with us all through her schooling and university.

If you could do it again, what would you change, if anything, about how you raised your family?

If I had my time over, I would try to spend more quality time with each of our children as they were growing up. Something they do so quickly! It seems so simple a request now, but then, with both Sue and I very busy with setting up our business, and the effect of our guests virtually living with us all, 24 hours a day, we were stretched. A very good friend, a priest, once said "Never say you are too busy, take the time, you may miss that opportunity" Very true, but life happens.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

What's one piece of advice you would give your children on parenting?

- There is always more than one!
- Always be there when they need you.
- Never push them too hard.
- Always show them that if you enjoy the task, you will succeed.
- Try not to frustrate them!
- Try always to encourage them and make them feel good in their own skin.
- Show them that they live up to your expectations.
- Don't take anything for granted.
- As they get older, give them space.

What's one funny thing you can remember your children doing or saying?

Our littlest, Jo, could never say Elephant, it always came out "alumshi". Everyone was sad when at 3 she said "elephant" with a great big smile. There are so many wonderful moments in growing up with your children, you could never list them all.

How do you think your children would describe you?

We have lots of cards full of love and appreciation from all the girls saying;

- "I am in awe of your resilience and determination, to live a full wonderful life; it is inspiring"
- "How precious my family is- How great is my love of you both."
- "For always being there for us"
- "We are all so very fortunate to have you to guide and support us".

One thing we are very proud of is the closeness of our four girls and all the nine grandchildren to each other.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

Do you consider yourself a strict or lenient parent?

Unfortunately you do not get a book of rules when you first become a parent. You learn as you go, and probably copy the best of your own parents that had an effect on you. I do not believe we were too lenient or too strict. I know my patience wore thin sometimes, and I lost it. Something I have always wished I could take back, but unfortunately you can not. I sincerely hope my children will forgive me.

What would you like your children and grandchildren to remember about you?

The good times.

What's a family tradition you hope your children will carry on?

Support each other and keep a deep love of the land.

Anything else you'd like to add about your children?

They are four of the most amazing people we have ever known.



YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



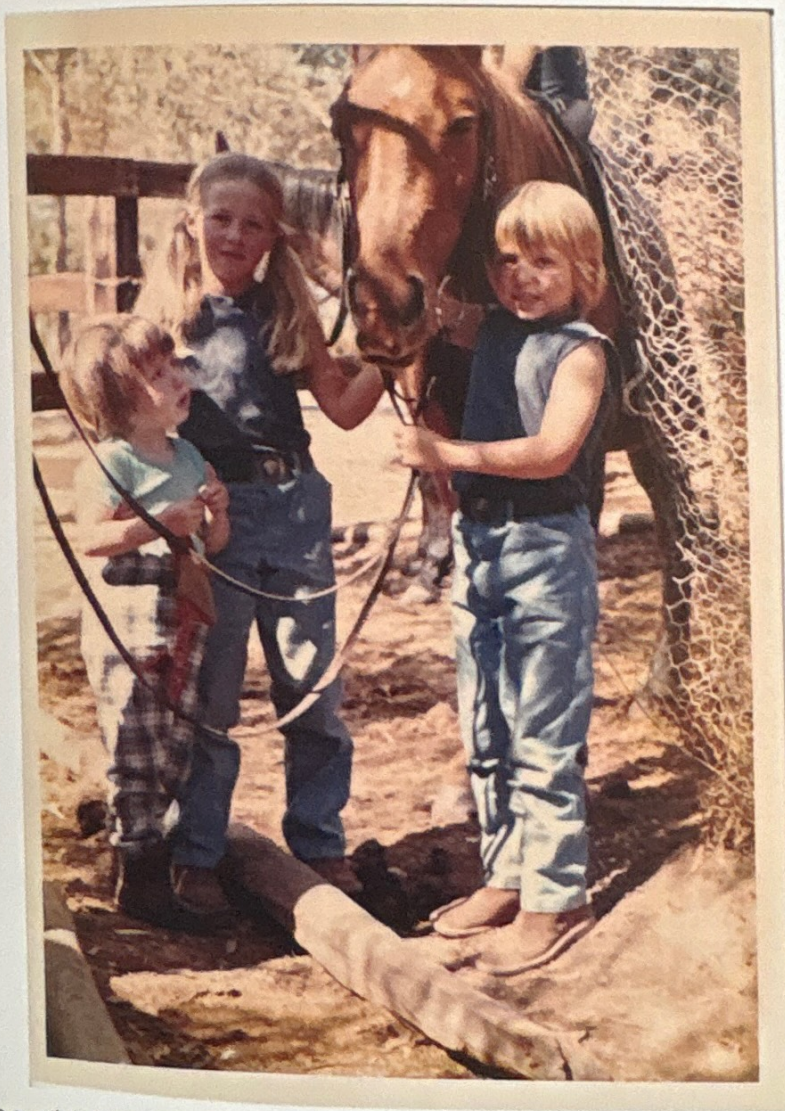
Katie and her Cat

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



Annie and Katie with their pet lamb.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



The three children helped to saddle up. Trishy with her toy kangaroo.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



Our first Family cruise around the Pacific, with the children and my mother and father.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



The four in life jackets on the same trip.
(Many years later, when we were cruising just as a couple, the girls posted this on Facebook saying "They didn't take us this time!!!")

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



Family reunion in Tasmania



Rather dry Ben Chifley Dam and the Ski Boat. They all loved water skiing as did the guests.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



Always on a horse!

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

November
1990; Jodi
now the
tallest, and
Annie with
Jessica.



YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



My 70th on the farm Menmuir

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

My 80th



A cruise with the family!

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY



2019 The Family at Sue's 80th Birthday Party. This was an amazing Surprise Party, but to keep Sue in the dark was not easy. We were about to take a 4wheel Drive adventure to Cape York with our neighbours and dearest friends, the Drowns. So because Sue wanted to see her Girls before we went, we had to drive to Albury where Jo was living at the time , and then to Sydney to see Kate. Then that night we met them all at the Party!

CHAPTER 9

BIG QUESTIONS

If you could share a meal with anyone in the world, who would it be and why?

Any of our friends, as we have so much history together. Yarrabin had many changes of Management during its 60 years, all of them family orientated, and all of them past guests who had a deep love for the place and the business.

As Sue and I always invited our guests into our family, and we looked after them 24 hours a day, and encouraged our staff, who were also generally past guests, to do the same. We supplied three meals, morning and afternoon teas, log fires, and plenty of things to do, if that was what they wanted.

As it turned out our four children grew up with our guest's children, as they played with them every time they stayed with us. That was the main success of the business, the many times the same guests would book to return for another holiday. However, because it was so full on, it meant we had little "family time" for ourselves, and Sue was always cooking for large groups. This made us consider that we had to have a complete break from the business fairly regularly, or we would burn out. This was why Cruising was our first choice of holiday.

Our first two guests we asked if they would be interested in running Yarrabin whilst we took a cruise, were Betty and Ross McKinny. They had been our 122nd guests in September 1963, and had brought their 13 month old, Heather, back in January 1965. They were very excited, they had been coming up often, and were thinking they would love to live "in the Bush". Ross had a Taxi business in Sydney, and Betty was a good organiser, and could cook! They both could ride, in fact we have a picture of Betty getting "Donkey" into a canter. Possibly that was the only time he did!

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

We took our first real break, and we went overseas for 6 months in 1974, and Betty and Ross moved into our space. They ran it very successfully, and went on to buy a farm locally and later open it for "Kids Camps". Not in opposition to Yarrabin, but a very successful and fulfilling business. Their daughter Heather is still a neighbour in Wisemans Creek.

What advice would you give to your 18 year old self?

Gav-Think more of others and their feelings and to have more confidence in myself.

If you could click your fingers and make one change in the world, what would it be and why?

Gav-For all people to be at peace with respect for each other.

Sue- For all people to communicate with each other, and spend less time on a screen.

Think back to a major turning point in your life. What happened?

Gav- When I became an Arizona Scout.

Sue- My trip on "The Himalaya", where I met Gavin.

If you could go back to any age in your life, what age would that be and why?

Gav- 30, when you are so full of enthusiasm and have the strength to do it all!

Sue- 22, When I was travelling around Britain and Europe.

How do you define a "good" or "successful" life?

We have enjoyed a "successful" life, and it is all due to our business Yarrabin Guest Property.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

In the beginning, whilst we were building up our accommodation facilities, we were also running a touring business. We were meeting the morning train from Sydney and running a minibus tour to Hillend for lunch and back along the Bridle Track to catch the afternoon train.

One particular trip, I had hired a longer bus, because of the number of guests the Railways had booked. All went very well until we got to a right- angle bend on the Track overlooking the Macquarie River, a long way below. As the bus could not go right around a very sharp corner, I backed up, till the wheels were just on the edge of the cliff.

An elderly, slightly deaf couple in the back seat, looked out the rear window and let out a loud scream. We moved forward and got around the corner. From the back came, "Thank God for that" she yelled! Dad replied "Don't thank God ,thank the bloody Driver!" That particular section of road has since been closed, as it slid off the cliff into the River.

On another occasion Sue had to drive the Minibus to meet a group of businessmen who got off the train. Their first question was "where is the driver?" Sue sweetly replied, "I am your host for today".

Once again all went very well, until she drove down to the River crossing to see that a storm up stream had flooded it. I had told her if she could still see the tops of the concrete blocks, it would be safe to cross. To reassure her very worried passengers, "Not to worry" and drove into the river, and out the other side.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

How do you feel about getting older?

After a while you realise there is nothing you can do about it! Everyone says "slow down" and that's the last thing you want to do.

It sneaks up on you, but if you are blessed with good health, as we both have been, you thank God and live it.

What's the best and worst advice you've ever been given?

Never go to bed on a cross word.

The worst advice we once received was to invest in a particular scheme. We talked about it and decided not to be involved. Unfortunately many others were involved and lost heavily.

THE EARLY YEARS

We also ran day tours of the Bathurst district for Ansett Airways, either by car or our Minibus, and had Hire Car and Tour Bus tours at the homestead. These would involve a barbeque lunch and a sheep shearing and working dog display at the neighbour's property.

However, once we had completed the accommodation we no longer needed or had the time to run these tours, so we concentrated on the main business. This grew much faster than we had dreamed. We did find that so many of our younger guests came so often, we felt we needed to find something different to do. So we often went back over to Hillend for an overnight camp, or went to nearby Chifley Dam, and took them all water skiing.

Other activities included canoeing down Wisemans Creek, or overnight Horseback riding treks. Many such adventures only added to the many friends that we have made over the years.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

What's the best compliment you've ever received?

Sue-That I am always positive and smiling. Gav - That you are always there for us.

If you could have just one of these qualities; rich, intelligent or good looking, which would you choose and why?

We are rich with having such a wonderful, loving family.

My wife is intelligent enough for both of us, and a wonderful Chef

I have been "looking good" for a long, long time, everyone I meet says so!

So why not!

The one thing we have always tried to do is before any major decision is to be made, we discuss it and work through it all in detail. Then if we agree to go ahead, we are both on the same page.

This has been always since we have been in business together. So many people have been amazed that we have been able to work together for so long and so well.

This has been particularly true since 1988, when we had a wonderful year off, enjoying all we could of the Australian Bicentennial celebrations, including sailing to Brisbane on the First Fleet , and later , being staff with the Danish crew in the Balloon Race from Perth to Sydney. Both were very exciting holidays.

We have also had the most wonderful Cruise holidays, and overseas holidays with the children, taking them when they were little and again as teen ages, and seeing it all thru their eyes, was a wonderful experience.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

What's your favourite topic of conversation? What do you least like talking about?

Family and Australian History.

Family dinners and the laughter that goes with the beautiful meal.

What we least like talking about-Politics, Religion, and War

How did the business progress?

From the very beginning our family grew with the business, our guest's children became the friends of our children. The fact that the four girls have all grown up in a hospitality environment, has had a strong influence, on their lives and on the lives of their children. They are all leading successful, and fulfilling careers.

Life isn't always roses

1970. Of course life is not all roses, there are always many dark times you cannot avoid, and as you get older, you just learn to cope and accept the circumstances. After a time, if you are allowed to grieve, you finally come to terms with it all, and life goes on.

Two of these times occurred when one of our much loved guests was killed in a car accident. The first happened when a good friend of Sue's drove up in her sports car to stay for a weekend and catch up with Sue as they had not seen each other for some time. Needless to say it was great for Sue. She had so many friends in Tasmania, and we had been so busy since starting Yarrabin, she had lost touch with a few of them.

The weekend went off very well, but when it was time to leave, because the bus was full of guests and bags, there was one lass who could not fit. Sue asked her friend if she would give her a lift to Sydney, which she did.

Unfortunately, there was an accident on the Bell Road on the Mountains when the driver was killed and her passenger was injured but survived. A terrible shock to everyone and a disaster for the families.

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE

In the same year we had a guest, the editor of a travel trade magazine in Sydney, who was very keen on promoting Yarrabin. He had first come up for a weekend to try it out for himself, as he had heard about it from the NSW Government Tourist Bureau. He loved it so much he became a regular visitor. He even got me involved in a Tourist Conference in Melbourne, where I managed a TV interview. His last weekend with us started very strangely.

He came to me whilst I was preparing breakfast for the guests. He had heard there was a lady who had been with us for a week, who wanted a lift to the afternoon train. I explained that our vehicle was insured for public use, and thank you, but I would take her into town. At morning tea he said that one of the staff wanted to go into town, so he could take them both. My reply was the same! Then at lunch he came at me again. Peter, another regular guest of ours, wanted some tobacco, and a lift to Bathurst. At his stage I gave up, He obviously wanted to go to town!

As I had the afternoon off, I went up home to try out a new electric organ we had just bought. I was playing when Sue rushed in with the news that there had been an accident on the Saltwater Creek bridge with our guests involved. I raced for the car, passed a long line of parked cars. Walked over the narrow wooden bridge, fully blocked with a Log Truck and a Tow Truck that was trying to remove it. I saw David's car, on its wheels, facing Bathurst, in the paddock beside the Bridge. I ran over to help the Paramedic get him out of the driver's seat. The medic then told me the other two had already been taken to hospital. In my confusion I said "but there were three". This started some onlookers on the road to dash for the Creek. The medic then said that the car was coming from Bathurst, at the time, so our guest was on the train! The police wanted me to come with them to identify the body, a terrible experience I have never wanted to do again. Our other two passengers survived their injuries, but have never forgotten that day.

YARRABIN GUEST PROPERTY AND THE CHRISTIE FAMILY

CHAPTER 10

ADVENTURES OVER THE YEARS

We have been extremely fortunate to have travelled around this great country of ours and indeed, the world. Our adventures span many years and there are too many to mention but here are just a few worth mentioning.

The 1980's was a very busy 10 years for us! Dana rang from the States and mentioned that they had seen the movie, "The Man from Snowy River" and wondered if we could organise a ride like that for them. So in February 1985, we had a 3 day ride with the Rudd family hosted by the "Reynella" Snowy Mountain riding group.



John, Dana and Sophie Burden arrive for the Snowy River Ride 1986

We followed this up with Dana's first group in 1986. It was a resounding success. I drove a hired minibus whilst Sue was the hostess. We met the party at the airport, stayed overnight in Sydney, then crossed the Blue Mountains to Yarrabin for the weekend. We then travelled south via the Hume Highway to Adaminaby to start 5 days of camping and riding horses! We followed this with many more trips and groups to the Snowy Mountains!

GAVIN GEORGE CHRISTIE



Our 10th group of American friends on Snowy Mt. ride. Over the ten years that we ran these tours, which were organised in America by my old boss, Dana Burden, we made many friends, some of whom hosted our family in Utah, when we rode through Navajo Indian country. They invited the whole family and they

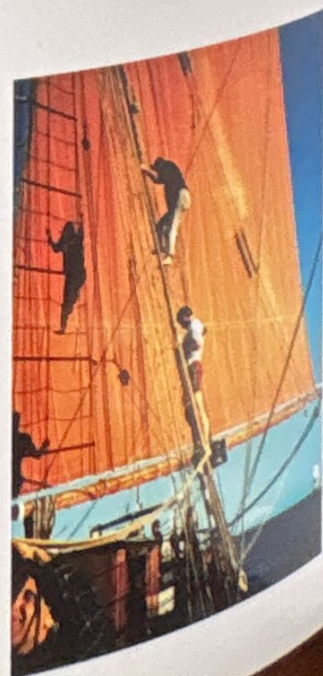
hosted us through the trip. The climax was the ride through Monument Valley with our hosts.

BICENTENNIAL YEAR - TALL SHIPS AND HOT AIR BALLOONS



1988 The Eye of the Wind. one of the First Fleet Re-enactment. We were crew and sailed from Newcastle to Brisbane.

Meanwhile I had to climb up the rigging and assist in letting out the sails. We were crew as well as paying passengers.



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1988. Sue loved being on the Helm, with the Captain standing alongside giving instructions.

Sue was still on the Helm, but loving it so much, this was her second watch. Midnight to 4am and stayed till 7am.



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At it again, without falling overboard. My other job was crouching in the Bow Sprit and to watch out for whales and fishing nets. Boy was I sea sick. When we got off ship, the land was heaving and I could hardly stand.

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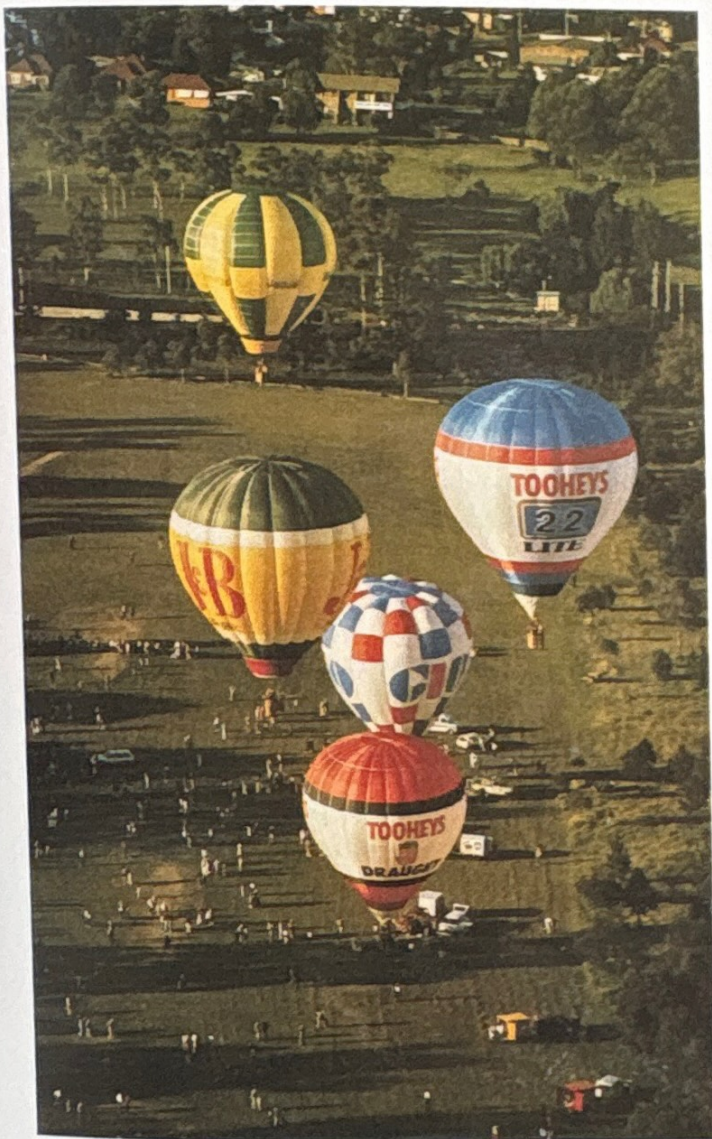
1988. We also volunteered as support crew for the Balloon Race Perth to Sydney.
We took our Farm ute by train and joined the Danish Team. A wonderful
experience.

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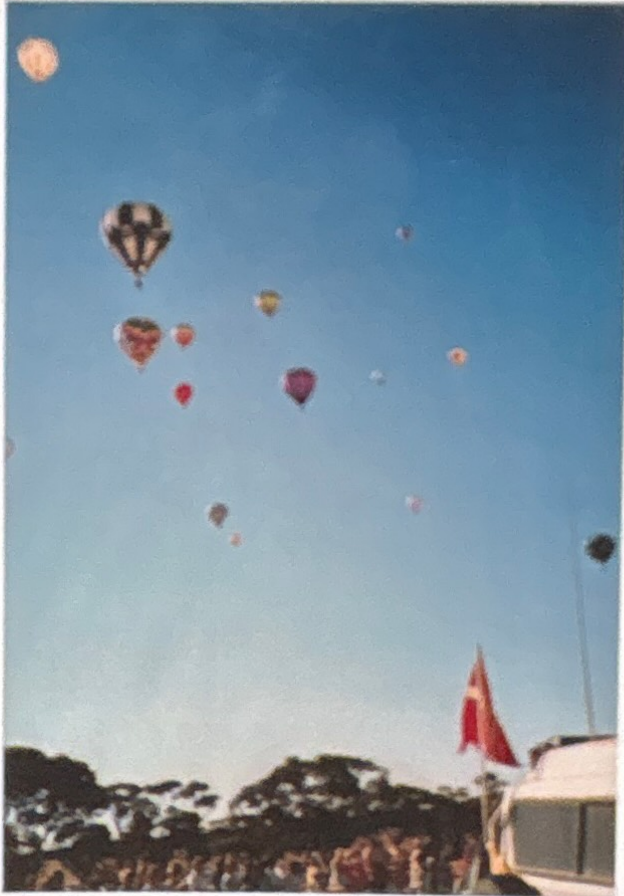
1988. Learning how to get the Basket in the right position and filling the Balloon with hot air to take it up.

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1988. Suddenly we were aloft as 2 of the team had returned to Denmark, injured. They had caught the basket in the top of a tree whilst landing at Kimba in South Australia. We were immediately made Flight Crew, which left the two wives to drive the two trucks, and follow the balloons, whilst we watched from above.

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1988. A magnificent sight with 85 balloons around us, whilst we watched Sue in the 4wd way down below, snaking thru the desert. At one stage we could see the vehicles were approaching a deep dry creek. "Are you in 4wheel drive?" I innocently asked. "OF COURSE WE ARE!!"



A hard landing without injury, but tangled with ropes and gas bottles. The children met us at Dubbo, and were given a free ride by one of the teams. Altogether a wonderful Adventure.

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Because 1988 was such a wonderful year, we found it very hard to settle once we got home. But we did not want to retire, we still had a few cows and liked to be of assistance whenever the girls needed it. Annie coined the word - **PREFERMENT** that we fell into, in other words "Doing whatever we wanted to do"

So since then we have planned a special trip each year or two, put down a deposit and looked forward to the adventure. We love living at "Menmuir" and hope to stay here for the rest of our lives. But we have enjoyed some wonderful cruising.

The first was to Africa for a Safari from Nairobi to Cape Town, to celebrate our 50th Wedding Anniversary in 2014.

What a wonderful experience that was. All the tours were organised, and even the fact our luggage went missing the first night was "Don't worry, this is Africa".

Ever since we were married we had dreamed of touring Africa, but we either did not have time or it was too dangerous. We had now picked the perfect time and everything went well. The animals were amazing and the open air vehicles were great fun as we searched for the Nine. Sue loved the zebras and my favourite, the giraffes. We saw them all and stayed overnight in resorts and tents, and the final day we climbed the Table Mountain behind Cape Town, and looked down on the Queen Mary, the ship that took us back to Perth and Sydney, what a wonderful voyage that was! All we expected and more.

Another great trip was to Russia. When Gorbachev became President I said to Sue, much to her surprise, "Let's go to Russia". We flew to London and went on a bus tour to Moscow and back through Finland. Every day was an adventure.

One frightening encounter was at the border, we were all herded into a small room and our passports were taken. We all stood or sat very quietly, when suddenly a little guard started to yell and carry on. It turned out there was a "No Smoking" sign on the wall, and one of our number had lit up, as none of us could read Russian!

When we got to Berlin and were waiting to go through Checkpoint Charlie, a lady on board had to get off and go to the toilet and was immediately reported as

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missing! Such a fuss, and very embarrassing for the girl. But just to see the horror of that wall, and how backward the whole city was, was truly amazing. We were told by the hostess on the bus not to buy anything without getting a receipt, and when we got to the border on the way into Finland, we were stopped and searched, and the driver and hostess were taken off the bus. For a while we thought this might just be the end of our holiday! They both finally came out, very ruffled. Amazingly Trish and Jodi visited Berlin on their tour in Europe just a few months later and were there when the Wall finally came down.

On our next adventure, to celebrate another Wedding Anniversary ,we went on a special Australian Charter of the Azamara on a circle cruise around the Mediterranean. It was a 34 day Cruise with some 32 ports, some so close you could see the last one from the next. It was fantastic to cruise along the French, and Spanish coast and explore each little port for a day. We spent so little time in our cabin, we were pleased we had only taken an inside one for the trip. The ship was small and very comfortable, and all on board were Aussies . We sailed along the shores of Africa, missing one port, Tunisia, because of local troubles, and picked up another one, Santorini Island instead. Then up into the Adriatic Sea and got off in Venice, one of our favourite cities in Italy.

The longest cruise we have taken was in 2019 on the CMV Columbus, a beautiful old ship that had been brought up to date in 2017 and we boarded in Sydney as it was half way through a world trip from London. It continued on to New Guinea, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore then India and Petra in the Red Sea. Here we visited The Treasury and its amazing surroundings. On thru the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean to Gibraltar, Portugal and London by the 5th May. 84 days and three albums full of photos. We thought it would be too long, but we did not want to get off! A truly wonderful trip. Before flying home we took in a Western WWi tour of the Western Front with an Army Historian. As I had lost an uncle, Jack, my mothers brother, shot down over the Polygon Wood. I was keen to see the area, and visit his

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grave. It was a very well run tour from Paris and back, but it made us realise what a terrible price the generation of Australians had paid for the peace we enjoy .

Our last cruise, to celebrate our 60th anniversary, was the Canal trip on the Rhine and the Danube. After years of watching tv ads, this ten week trip lived up to everything we thought it would and much more. Gliding past beautiful scenery on a mirror reflecting shore line, tall cliffs topped with ancient castles. Our ensuite Cabin with one wall a floor to ceiling window, in complete silence, it was an amazing experience. The sun was out for nearly the whole trip, so the upper deck, with comfortable lounges, sliding under low bridges and past beautiful villages, was quite beyond description. On top of all that, the food and service could not have been better. Every port we stopped at, there was a walking tour or bus tour for you to enjoy with a great local historian to inform you. Quite the most relaxing holiday we have ever had.

We have always had a love of cruising!!



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1992 Sue and I enjoy some time away on a Sitma Cruise.



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From the Yarrabin Newsletter dated Autumn 2009 when Graeme and Annie Phillips and their family were running Yarrabin.

"Time, they say, rushes past faster the older you get! And Yarrabin is fast approaching her 50th birthday in 2013- and that date will be here before we know it! Not only will we soon celebrate that special 50th birthday for Yarrabin, but this year marks our tenth year holding the reins of Yarrabin.

We took over in December 1999, with loads of grand plans, and with Graeme in East Timor, as a Peacekeeper. A big thank you to Annie's parents Gavin and Sue Christie, for being there at the start of our fantastic Yarrabin journey. They promised us a year of their time to get us started, yet continue to be very much involved in Yarrabin ten years later, Gavin and Sue still ride with us, and nowadays he will even wear a helmet!

What has occurred in the last 10 years? We've watched our family grow (we started with 3 children and now have 4, with our first child finishing school and now working with us); we've watched your families grow and gained a lifetime of memories; we have shared our lives with some wonderful people and some wonderful horses; we've taken thousands of photos; we've added the Games Room, ripped out the old kitchen, and put in a new WOW spa for 14, renovated all the bathrooms and added reverse cycle air conditioning; we've been blessed with many amazing and tireless team members from all over the world; we've launched our innovative Yarrabin Leadership & Horses program and started up new horsemanship workshops; we've weathered the worst drought ever, huge insurance hikes, SARS and the Equine influenza epidemics; and we've been blessed with perfect health and fitness."

Our Legacy - Yarrabin will always be remembered for the friendships made and the support networks that have formed and remain strong today and into the future. It provided my children and grandchildren with a blessed childhood, one that will always be cherished. "Do what you Love and success will follow".

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CHAPTER 11

THE LAST WORD

The rest of the family rather seem to humour me in my pursuit of all the family history, but I feel it is terribly important that my grandchildren at least have some knowledge of those who went before them. As the children of our daughters grow up I want them to know about all the wonderful people that have come and gone, and whose very life and the decisions they made, all went to form the pattern of their own lives.

There is no doubt that as you grow older the more you realise just how important everything is that happened in the past. Although we seem to live for today and we are always planning for tomorrow, we are all a product of the past. Our very genes, a complicated cocktail of all our ancestors.

As my life has been so blessed I feel I must somehow try to get the past into an interesting format so that perhaps someone will take up the challenge and pass it all on to future members of our Family. The greatest Blessing of my life was my father, a truly wonderful man in every way. Perhaps everyone feels that way about their Dad, but somehow I feel even more sincere than most.

How I wish that his Great Grandchildren could have known him. Perhaps in writing my own life story I might be able to give them an insight into his. We have in the Family History some letters from my fathers grandfather, Lyell Somers Christie, to his family, and it is these letters that have always fascinated me about his life. But we

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have so little detail of what his life was really like, and that is the challenge for all who read this history and try to add to it.

People are so much more than birth and death dates. They have lived right through a time that is so different to our own. They have met and known and loved so many other people and other families.

Most importantly they have made decisions in their lifetime that have changed the whole path of history for all those who come after.

Even small decisions have an amazing effect on our own lives. Each one of us will make similar decisions during our lifetime and that will in turn affect our children and their children. I have tried many times to get all the Family information together, but the more I try the more I realise what a difficult task it is.

People who live 50 to 80 years do an amazing amount of things during that lifetime. No one has a hope of getting it all down. But at least we can try to find out as much as possible and get it in some form so that it is there for future generations to ponder and wonder at.

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Yarrabin as it is today.

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An aerial view of the Yarrabin complex.
The little red roof in the centre is the original cottage.

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A bit of free time. January 2023

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We still like to be involved around the farm - Out moving Cattle on the Quad

A sincere and heartfelt thanks to Trishy and Sandra for their patience and computer skills. Without them this story would never have been published.

Thank you and God bless you both.

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